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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDING PARA 18

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SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN DISCUSSES DEFENSE ISSUES WITH
CZECHS

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: While much of Vice President Biden's discussions with Czech officials focused on missile defense, he also spoke in depth about Afghanistan, research cooperation and energy security. Biden said the U.S. looks forward to Czech participation in a new phased, adaptive approach (PAA) to missile defense but stressed that this is a decision Czechs must make themselves. Biden particularly highlighted USG interest in research and development cooperation as the PAA moves forward. Czech political leaders across party lines pressed for specific ways in which the Czech Republic could participate in this new phased, adaptive approach. Biden noted that Secretary Gates was discussing this with NATO Defense Ministers in Bratislava October 23 and called the November 6 High Level Defense Group the proper forum for more detailed discussions of this and other issues ("from Hercules to conventional help you might want").

¶2. (SBU) Summary Continued: The Czechs also commented on the U.S. missile defense policy review decision. Senators Alexandr Vondra and Karel Schwarzenberg expressed disappointment over the USG security policy review decision, as well as the manner in which it was announced. Left-of-center CSSD,s Lubomir Zaoralek express quite a different sentiment, however, thanking this administration for "the suspension of Missile Defense" and welcoming "a new relationship and a new opportunity."

¶3. (SBU) Biden and the Czechs also discussed Afghanistan/Pakistan and energy security, both of which CSSD Parliamentarian Jan Hamacek characterized as more pressing issues than MD. PM Fischer highlighted that the Czechs would be sending an additional 35 troops to Afghanistan. Biden noted U.S. interest in working with the Czechs on energy security and renewable energy, and strongly advocated Westinghouse's bid for the Temelin tender. End Summary.

Biden to Czechs - "We're Not Going Anywhere"

¶4. (SBU) During Vice President Biden's meetings with Czech officials, Biden emphasized that the USG is tied to the Atlantic alliance and firmly anchored to NATO and "We're not going anywhere." He focused on addressing misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and "understandable anxiety" concerning U.S. policy. Czech Prime Minister Jan Fischer welcomed the meeting as an opportunity to speak "as allies and partners" and noted that he considers the U.S. "an exceptional ally" and values our "strategic cooperation." Biden commented, "We

are at an inflection point in history; we have a chance to bend the course of history and avoid the terrible violence of the last century. There are no answers without a stable central Europe."

Biden Encourages Czech Involvement in Missile Defense

15. (SBU) Biden acknowledged that the changed Missile Defense policy had caused anxiety in some quarters, but stressed that the phased, adaptive approach is more effective at countering the existing threat and protecting our European allies. Praising Czech research and development capacity, Biden said the USG wants Czech participation - if the Czech Republic chooses to do so. Reinforcing his message of U.S. commitment, Biden said, "Article Five means something to us, and this new MD architecture is an Article Five commitment."

Czechs Ask - What are the Details?

16. (SBU) Prime Minister Fischer and others expressed keen interest in participating in the new missile defense system, but stressed their desire to know more concretely what form that participation could take. Senator and former Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg summed up the Czech sentiment best when he stated to Biden, "Facta, non verba; We need to know in concrete and detailed terms what role the Czech Republic can play and what the possibilities are." The Vice President commented that the ongoing Bratislava NATO ministerial was addressing some of those issues, and the November 6 High Level Defense Group (HLDG) would be the appropriate fora to discuss in detail the new MD architecture, as well as issues such as C-130s, FMF, and other military aid. On these issues the Vice President stated, "The U.S. HLDG participants will know clearly what I expect them to do." On the new architecture Biden committed

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that the USG will "let you know exactly what we have in mind," although he cautioned in this area that, "it's going to take time."

PM Fischer Flags Czech Interest - C-130s, FMF, RDTE MOU...

17. (SBU) PM Fischer also noted that the Czechs are very interested in acquiring C-130s. He stated that "we want to negotiate the price and revisit this issue." (Note: The Czechs have received a P and A initial price of USD 111 million, which they regard as too high. End Note.) He also commented that Czechs feel they receive too little FMF in comparison with Poland. With respect to research and development cooperation, PM Fischer stated that they would like this not just in the military sphere, but in a broader range of fields. Fischer also noted his appreciation for the upcoming establishment of the Office of Naval Research (ONR) and said the Education Ministry could be its partner. Fischer also touched upon the RDTE MOU as a key step, and noted that the Czechs would like to finalize this legal work as soon as possible.

Czech Concern - Who Pays?

18. (SBU) Senator and former Deputy Prime Minister Alexandr Vondra noted that "I'm in favor of working with you to strengthen NATO and of participating in the phased, adaptive approach to the Missile Defense system, but I have my doubts about NATO's response to the U.S. call for burden-sharing." He indicated that he hoped this new MD plan would materialize, and not be a virtual system that evaporates in the absence of resources. Biden responded by noting that the USG has no false expectations on burden sharing and that we are not expecting money from the French or Germans. Biden also assured Vondra that the USG has already covered the

costs of the first part of this phased, adaptive approach.

Mixed Sentiments on MD's Past Handling; Interest in Future
Architecture

¶9. (SBU) Czech officials, while eager for details, took different views of how missile defense had been handled in the past, particularly the public aspects. Schwarzenberg said that the way in which Czechs received the "message in the night" that MD was canceled was unhelpful, since missile defense had "special importance" in this part of Europe. Schwarzenberg relayed an anecdote comparing Czech feelings to that of a lover led on to believe lovemaking was imminent but then suddenly rejected and left frustrated. "In spite of all, we are friends of the U.S.," he said. In contrast, CSSD Parliamentarian Zaoralek thanked Biden for the USG "suspending" the radar plan. In Zaoralek's opinion this is a new beginning for U.S.-Czech relations on a more balanced and equal level. He and several other Czech politicians stressed the importance of MD's being within a NATO context. In response to the way in which the decision was announced, Biden stated, "In one sense we owe you an apology. I wish I had come before any announcement had been made."

Afghanistan - Praise for Czech Efforts; USG Not Drawing Down

¶10. (SBU) Biden thanked PM Fischer and others for what the Czechs are doing in Afghanistan and offered praise for Czech troops. He acknowledged that deployments are not popular in the Czech Republic, the U.S. or elsewhere. Biden emphasized that the USG has no intention of decreasing our presence in Afghanistan; the only question is how to shape the best policy. Biden stressed three linked issues: stability of Afghanistan; elimination of Al Qaeda; and stability in Pakistan. Biden characterized Pakistan as "the most dangerous country in the world, brimming with nuclear weapons and a large population of radicalized elements."

¶11. (SBU) PM Fischer noted that the Czechs want to strengthen their presence in Afghanistan, stating "It's about not just numbers but also capacity." Despite budgetary problems, Fischer stated that the GoCR is sending 35 more troops. Fischer also highlighted that his government has made a specific proposal on L-159s for Afghan forces, and that they are awaiting a response from the U.S. side. Fischer flagged that the Czechs believe the L-159s would be very effective assets and that they wish to discuss financing of this.

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Russia and Energy Issues

¶12. (SBU) The Vice President was clear to point out that he has been dealing with Russia for many years and that while "hope springs eternal," this administration is not "naive" about Russia. Christian Democrat (KDU-CSL) Pavel Svoboda noted that his party supported radar because it was related to rejecting the idea of Russian spheres of influence and that it is for this same reason that his party favors cooperation on the new MD system. Svoboda cautioned that "some of the steps the US is taking with regard to Russia make us nervous," an idea echoed by ODS Parliamentarian Miroslava Nemcova. Biden responded by noting that the USG rejects and will not compromise on the notion of Russian spheres of influence.

¶13. (SBU) On energy, the VP pointed out that if Europe could find alternatives to Russian sources, this could radically change Russian behavior. Biden warned against letting Russia have a monopoly on European energy supplies and noted, "We don't care if you purchase nuclear power from France or the U.S., but if you purchase from Russia, I have to question

your judgment." Biden commented to the PM that he was surprised Europe hasn't reacted better to the threat of one country's being able to turn off the spigot. Biden went on to note that in some areas of alternative energy Europe is ahead of us, and that the USG "is anxious to explore this with you." Prime Minister Fischer noted that the Czechs agree that Europe must strengthen its independence. Fischer commented that Europe is looking for diverse, stable supplies, not just geographically but also in kind. Thus nuclear capacity is important.

Temelin Tender and Westinghouse

¶14. (SBU) Fischer commented that Temelin is offering a "gigantic" tender and that the GoCR wants this to be as transparent as possible. Fischer flagged Czech interest in a deal attractive not only monetarily, but also in terms of technical cooperation. Biden commented, "Have I got a deal for you! If you want to get unhooked from Russia, look to Westinghouse." He questioned why the Czechs would want Russia to have control of Czech gas, oil AND nuclear supplies. He also pointed out "Westinghouse is a quality company; they don't build Chernobyls." Biden closed by stating, "I know your process will be fair, and I hope you understand that Westinghouse is making a good offer."

Biden Individual Pull-Asides with Paroubek and Topolanek

¶15. (SBU) Vice President Biden met with left-of-center CSSD leader Jiri Paroubek, who said he welcomed the MD decision. "I wouldn't word it like the PM, but I would say that we can be ready to do this as part of NATO. We are ready to negotiate when there is a real outline of the project." He dealt briefly with global issues, noting the Czech's geopolitical position as a net importer of raw materials from Russia and a net exporter to Germany. "This is our geopolitical reality. But that's no reason for us to be closed to other countries, even if we are in NATO." Paroubek also urged closer relations between his party and the U.S. Democratic party. He said his party had excellent relations with Israel as well as Arab nations and would like to help in the Mideast peace process. On Westinghouse's bid for Temelin expansion, he said that he believed France, not Russia, would prove to be the main competitor.

¶16. (SBU) Biden also met with former Prime Minister and center-right leader Mirek Topolanek, who had obviously prepared for the meeting. He praised Biden's Bucharest speech, and praised Obama for working to close the rift between old and new Europe. He said the U.S. is the Czech Republic's closest ally, welcomed the idea of a command and control site, but wondered how NATO would fund it. Topolanek appreciated Biden's remarks about a role for Czech research and development, recalling that it was an important element in the previous MD negotiations under his administration. He said that the Framework and RTD and E agreements were still important and should be finalized. Biden said the HLDG would carry that forward. Topolanek also pushed for resolution on the C-130 issue, saying that the U.S. price was far too high,

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and asked for help selling L-159s planes to Afghanistan. He noted that his administration tried to increase Czech involvement in Afghanistan, and that the current PM does not have a strong mandate. On Westinghouse and energy security, Topolanek said "Look, I know about energy security. As EU President I spent five hours with Putin. Three of these were eye-to-eye." He also pressed the VP on the Exxon Mobil sale of its shares of the TAL pipeline. He said he fears Russia will buy them and said he looks to the U.S. to help give the Czechs a chance to bid for them, although Topolanek acknowledged that this is a private sector deal.

Czech Officials Appreciative of Biden Visit; Press Criticize
Lack of Access

¶17. (SBU) Across the political spectrum Czech officials were very appreciative of the visit by the Vice President. The Czechs are also now very focused on the upcoming High Level Defense Group, which Biden has billed as the appropriate forum to discuss in detail the range of defense and strategic cooperation issues that were not answered during this visit. Predictably, the Czech media were more critical, committed to the view that Czechs were the pawn sacrificed for strategic gains with Russia and disappointed at a lack of direct media access to the Vice President and what they regarded as a lack of specificity on the Czech role in the phased, adaptive approach to missile defense. As a result, expectations - both among media and politicians - for more concrete answers from the HLDG are high.

¶18. (SBU) The Office of the Vice President did not have a chance to clear this cable before it was sent out.

Thompson-Jones